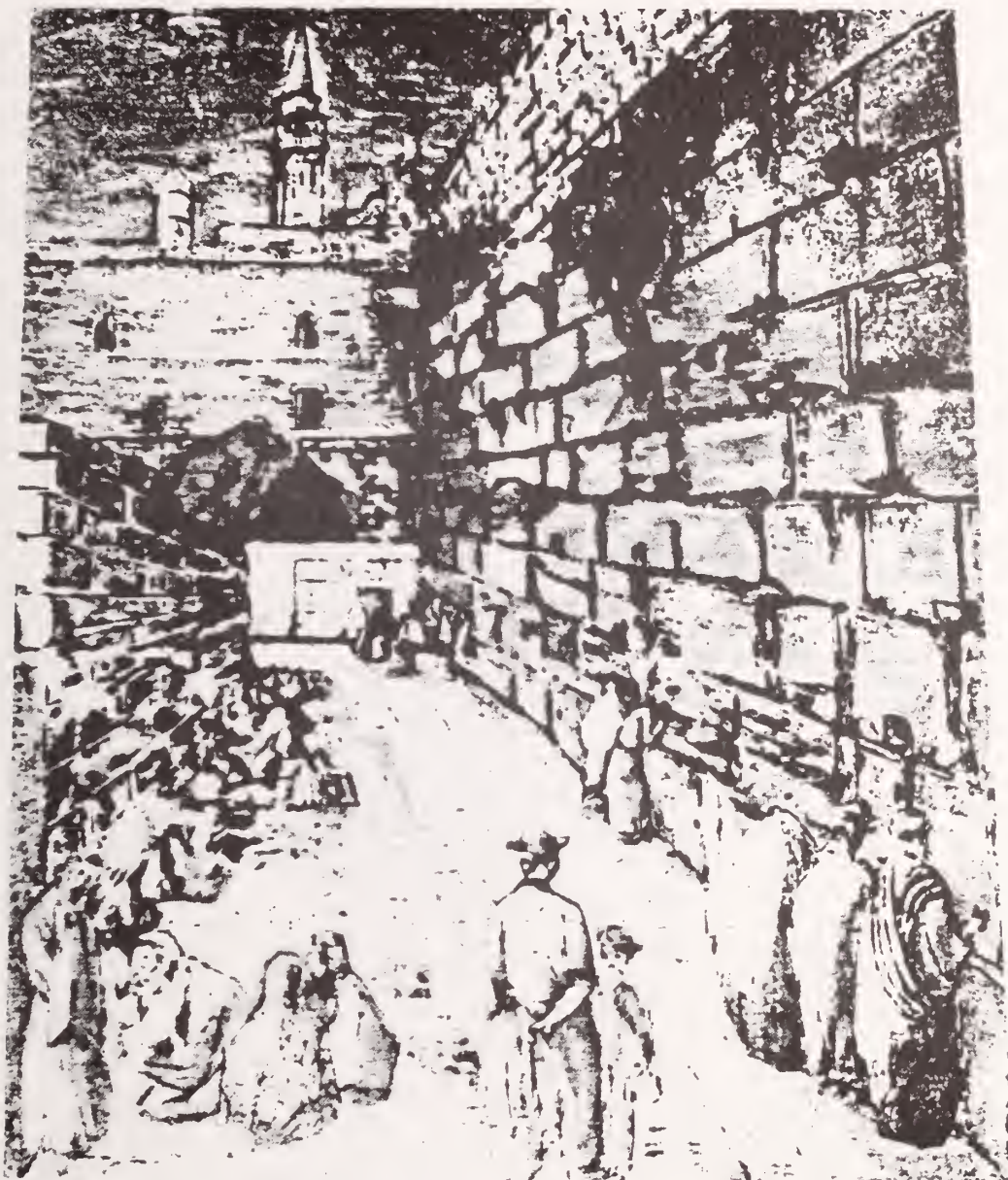


# *The Brooklyn Jewish Center Review*



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*New Year Greeting and Journal Sections*

# NEWS OF THE CENTER

## MISHNA CLASS TO BEGIN ITS 29th YEAR OF STUDY

Our Mishna Class will celebrate the end of its 28th year and the start of the 29th on Sunday, October 13th. Services will be held at 8:30 am, followed by breakfast at 9:15 am, sponsored by Belle and Isaac Franco. Rabbi Bloch will then conduct the lesson that morning. All students will be registered at the time. Classes will continue on the Sundays following: The breakfast on October 20th will be sponsored by Dr. Milton Schiff in loving memory of his wife, Irene. The breakfast on October 27th will be sponsored by Mrs. Kaye Gold in loving memory of her husband, David, who was our Executive Director for many years.

Those of you who wish to sponsor future breakfasts, or to co-sponsor, may make arrangements with Isaac Franco. We suggest that you act expeditiously as our past experience shows no gaps in the schedule. We will try to honor dates chosen by past sponsors for special events in their lives. These, however, must be confirmed without delay to enable the Fellowship to accommodate others who desire those dates.

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*The views expressed  
by the writers in these pages  
are not necessarily those of the Review.*

## CALENDAR DIARIES

Calendar Diaries for 5746/1985-86 are available for the asking at the Main Desk. We are indebted to Riverside Memorial Chapel for its kindness in providing the diaries for our members. The distribution will be made as long as the supply lasts.

RESERVE

**Sunday, November 3, 1985  
11:00 am**

for our

## *Annual Meeting*

Annual Report by  
Our President  
**Mr. Benjamin Moskowitz**

Refreshments and Entertainment  
Social Hour

## PLEASE NOTE:

Our Legacy Development Committee is ready to assist you or your legal representative to make provision for gifts in your will.

Information can be obtained from our office.

## ABOUT THE COVER...

The depiction is a painting of Israeli artist Joel Rohr and shows the artist's conception of the Western Wall. Rohr was born in Poland and has traveled over the world. While in Israel, he served as a soldier, was a farmer and a kibbutznik. The painting hangs at the Daroff House in Philadelphia.



# GIVING

## A LIVING DEATH OR A DEATHLESS LIFE

by Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

If my memory serves me correctly, it is nigh onto a half century that I have been attending services here at the Center. Nearly all that time has also been devoted to some form of service to make the wheels move smoothly and thus enhance our religious services.

I heard Rabbi Levinthal deliver many a sermon, some of which stick in my mind. His reputation was then world-wide. This I personally can attest to, as my "association" with the United States Army took me to many lands where both the Atlantic and Pacific lapped the sands of the seashores. Whenever I mentioned his name, the chaplain would invariably say, "Oh, yes, of The Brooklyn Jewish Center."

There was one lesson he taught us that sank into the marrow of my existence, and that was tzedekah - giving of your heart. There are many people who never learned the lesson until it was too late.

I have run across such persons and have tried to steer them into the paths taught to me by my parents and the Rabbi. Thus, when someone needs guidance along these lines, I have been successful in steering them into the right direction. Imagine coming across a person who rarely gave, despite substantial holdings. Yet, when the end of days comes to such starved individuals, with help, the assets go where they can do the most good, even though the granary was chock full with no one to bestow the grain upon until the days are over.

It makes you feel good when you have learned early and can impart these feelings to others. We had a good teacher. May we always remember and practice his teachings.

On this sacred day, perhaps the most solemn moment is reached in that touching Memorial Service which we have just recited for our dead. Once again we recall the love, the affection and the devotion that we enjoyed when our departed ones were alive. Once again we fulfill the rabbinic interpretation of the Biblical command: "Honor thy father and thy mother;" i.e., "We are to honor them in life and we are to honor them in death."

But simply remembering our dead is not the greatest honor that we can bestow upon them. Honor them we can and we shall, if we make good use of this hour by reflecting upon what their death as well as their life ought to mean to us. Honor them we shall if we furthermore ask ourselves the question what life, as well as death, means to us. This breathing, eating, feeling, yearning, thinking, suffering, planning—what does it all mean, what is it for, what are its ultimate purposes and aims? Tolstoy spoke truly when he said: "In the reply to that question lies the essence of every religion. The essence of religion consists solely in the answer to the question: "Why do I live, and what is my relation to the infinite universe around me?"

Paradoxically speaking—and paradox has become the fashion these days—I might say that we can best learn to understand life if we will first learn to understand death! And the Jew, as we shall soon see, has learned this truth and therefore lays so much emphasis upon a proper understanding of death; therefore

*"When I remove from Thee, O God,  
I die whilst I live; but when  
I cleave to Thee, I live in death."*

*-Jehudah Halevi*

our religion enjoins us on all our festive days to recite the *Yizkor* or Memorial Prayer for our dead, so that thinking of our dead we may come to think of death, and thinking of death, we may learn to understand the meaning of life.

On the New Year, especially, our thoughts unconsciously turn to that subject. We then seem to fear death, and we come to the Synagogue and pray to our Father in Heaven: "*Zik'renu L'Hayim*"—"Remember us and grant us that greatest of all gifts—life!" That is our common desire, our one dearest wish. Indeed, the Jew has been accused of laying undue stress upon this earthly existence; he is said to have an exceptional dread of death, and his liturgy, for these sacred days more particularly, has been charged by certain writers with encouraging this feeling. Someone has even wittily declared that if ever a remedy should be discovered by which people would not have to die, the ministers would have to retire and the houses of worship would have to close their doors.

I trust that this is not the feeling which prompted you to seek God this morning. I am sure that you came here solely for the purpose of pledging your allegiance to the God of Israel, to crave His love, and to seek His forgiveness for past failures and His help for noble living in the year to come.

Whenever I think of those who become religious only when they are reminded of death, I cannot help but think of the story that is told of the preaching friar, who

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This sermon was preached by Rabbi Levinthal on Yom Kippur, September 10, 1921. It is published in the Rabbi's book, "Steering or Drifting—Which?" in 1928 by Funk & Wagnalls Company.

*This article was selected to commemorate  
the third Yahrzeit of Rabbi Levinthal.*

*Louis Kramer*

one day saw at Damascus an old woman carrying in her right hand a brazier containing fire, and in her left hand a vial of water. The friar asked her, "What are you going to do?" She answered that with the fire she wanted to burn Paradise and with the water to extinguish Hell. And he asked her, "Why do you want to do this?" "Because," she replied, "I do not want anybody to do good for the sake of gaining Paradise as a reward, nor for fear of Hell, but simply for love of God." It is a story which only paraphrases the Rabbi's command: "Be not like servants who minister to their master upon the condition of receiving a reward."

But let us return to our theme. There are three different views held by different people concerning death, and these three views influence the lives of those who hold them. The various views of death will give to us three conceptions of life as they are entertained today. These opinions may be fittingly designated by the three Hebrew terms by which our last resting place, the cemetery is known.

The Hebrew language is rich in synonyms. There are so many words, apparently, meaning the same thing; and yet upon close examination you will find there is a shade of difference that distinguishes them. In no case is this better illustrated than in the Hebrew designation of our final resting place. It is known as the "*Beth Hak'voroth*," the Graveyard; it is known, too, as the "*Beth Olom*," the Eternal Abode, and it is also known as the "*Beth ha-Hayim*," the House of Life.

These three terms do not denote merely a difference in verbal expression; they represent three philosophies of thought and action, three views of life and death current among our own people.

To a great many of our people, death represents a "*Beth Hak'voroth*," a multitude of graves—graves that put an end to the farce or tragedy called life. For them the dust which covers the flesh ends all, and that is the reason why death cannot influence their lives for good. They do not believe that death is a change from one life unto another. To them nothing is eternal but death. They do not believe in immortality, in whatever form we may

understand that term, and hence their conduct consists not in aspiring to achieve the eternal verities of life, but simply in seeking to get all the physical pleasures and joys possible out of this world. Believing that death is the "*Beth Hak'voroth*," they turn their hearts and their souls into a "*Beth Hak'voroth*"—into a cold, lifeless grave where lie buried all the finer, nobler aspects of life. They hanker after selfish indulgence and position at any cost, they store up goods for this world only, they lack all spirituality. Yea, if death is the "*Beth Hak'voroth*," if the grave is to end all, if nothing is to remain behind, if the good we do does not live after us, then life is certainly not worth living. If there is to be nothing but this life, this existence of the body, then "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" is not only the philosophy of the Epicurean, but the temptation of the most wise and frugal and self-restraining of men.

But if there is another kind of life, if all our labor has this value in it, that while a man is building up his outward estate, it is certain that the man himself will live, no matter what becomes of his property and his possessions, then all his endeavors have endless scope, and his life becomes redeemable and radiant. If we see life, in Spinoza's phrase, "under the aspect of eternity," as the training ground of our imperishable souls; if we understand by life not years, but the service which is to glorify them; not a space in which to do our own pleasure, but God's; not an opportunity merely for heaping up riches or getting enjoyment, but for transfiguring these activities into the means of self-ennoblement; if we understand by death not the "*Beth Hak'voroth*," but the "*Beth Olom*," the abode of the eternal soul, whence it may continue to shed its beneficent luster, then indeed does life become worth living.

And those of us who look upon death as the entrance of the soul into a higher, eternal existence, strive so to mould our conduct that our good deeds may render us immortal. This difference between the "*Beth Hak'voroth*" and the "*Beth Olom*" conceptions of death is the distinguishing line between the savage and the man of true civilization, between the man who is

but a higher form of the beast, and the man who is angelic, God-like; between the man who lives only for today and the man who lives with the thought of immortality ever before him. The savage, for instance, cares little for the future. He lives for today, and in every today he lives for the hour. Time is of the least importance to him. The barbarian again differs from the savage in this, that he lives today for tomorrow, perhaps, but not for next year. The semi-civilized man lives for next year, but only for the year or a few years. The civilized man begins to live in the present for the future. And the Jewish civilized man begins to live with a sense of the forever. His heart is not a "*Beth Hak'voroth*," a cold, cruel grave, but a "*Beth Olom*," an abode for the eternal blessings of life—the source whence spring the cravings for immortal life.

And yet, though this should be the distinguishing trait of the Jew, it is tragic to behold how many *Beth Hak'voroth* people there are! How many who, though they walk and talk, and eat and drink, are really not living at all, but dead—walking corpses! It is startling when you come to think of it, how many dead men and dead women there are in the world today. In saying this, I am speaking not of dead bodies in the parlors of undertakers and in the graves of cemeteries, but of the men and women who are walking the streets of this great city, resting in its myriad homes, entering its theaters and churches, thronging its crowded ways of business and pleasure. Nine out of ten of these persons are not alive at all, but dead. They have eyes, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; they have minds, but they do not understand; they have hearts, but they do not love; they have souls, but they see no visions and dream no dreams. Living *Kvorum* they are! They have the reputation of being alive, but they are really dead! The Rabbis see them in their true light when they tell us that "The evil doers, even while alive, may be termed dead."

In contrast to these, there are men and women who look upon death as the *Beth Olom*, the entrance to eternity, and who, therefore, turn their hearts and their souls into living fountains of eternal spiritual life. They devote their lives to the uplift of their fellow man, they support every



noble undertaking, they assist, financially and morally, charitable, educational and religious institutions; their whole being is inspired by noble ideas and sacred ideals. To such men and women, life does not mean a road to the *Beth Hak'voroth*, but an opportunity to gain entrance to the *Beth Olom*, the life that is eternal. These men, though their bodies are covered by the dust, are not dead, but live on in the hearts of their fellow men. Their good deeds remain unforgotten and cherished memorials of their existence. How truly the poet speaks who sings:

*"When I remove from Thee, O God,  
I die whilst I live; but when  
I cleave to Thee, I live in death."*

On such a day as this, then, how blessed is the truth which comes to us: that we are not as the beasts that die, that we are as the gods that live! That for which we were made is immortality. Our journey is not to the grave. It is for us to make the grave not the end of our existence, not the *Beth Hak'voroth* which shall bury our last memory, but the gateway to a higher life—a life urging mankind on to noble thoughts and glorious deeds.

I said there is still a third term by which man's last resting place is known—the *Beth ha-Hayim*—the House of Life. It sounds strange, does it not, to call a cemetery a place of life. And yet, that name represents the grandest, the noblest conception of life and death—one which, to us Jews, must appeal supreme. We, if we so will, can not only live on to eternity by the memory of our good deeds, but we can live on by causing those good deeds to be continued after we are gone. We can live on even though our bodies have entered their eternal abode. The Rabbis explain this truth when they ask, "Why does the Bible, in recording David's death, say: 'And David slept with his fathers?' Why does it not say: 'And David died?'" "Because," reply the wise masters, "David left a son who walked in the good ways of his father, and who continued his noble deeds; therefore, David was really not dead, but lived on through the good deeds of his son."

And again, describing the opening ceremony at the dedication of the first Temple, when Solomon, bearing the Ark

on its way to the Holy of Holies, cried out: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; that the King of Glory may come in," the Sages, in a remarkable legend, tell us that the gates only opened when Solomon first brought the ark wherein lay the body of his father, David. "In that moment David came back to life," the Sages say; "for did not David himself say: 'O Lord, Thou broughtest up my soul from the nether-world; Thou didst keep me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.'" In this mystical language, the Rabbis emphasize the truth that David, though buried, found death a *Beth ha-Hayim*, because Solomon, carrying on his father's work, fulfilling his father's mission, realizing his father's dream and hope, lifted David out of *Sheol* and gave new life to his soul. David came to life again in that hour!

Yea, we live again in the lives of our children, and if our children live our lives, then the grave is for us a *Beth ha-Hayim*, a place of life, for we cannot die; we live again in them and through them.

If it is true that there are so many people who are dead though their bodies give the semblance of life, how many are there who, when the grave shall receive their mortal remains, shall indeed remain dead, without even a remembrance of their life to succeed them? When we see so many of the children of our day, the life they lead, the ideals that permeate their beings, when we see how far estranged they are from the religious teachings of their ancestors, we may indeed be concerned with the knowledge of what the future has in store for us.

You remember the Biblical tale, how the blind Isaac wanted to bestow his blessing upon his favorite child, Esau. "And he said: Behold now, I am old, *I know not the day of my death.*" Something evidently worried our father Isaac. He wanted to know what the day of his death would mean to him—whether death for him would be the *Beth Hak'voroth* or the *Beth ha-Hayim*. But when Esau appeared before him with the delicacies prepared to delight his palate, you recall that the Bible says: "And Isaac trembled very exceedingly." A sudden fear took hold upon him; and the Rabbis, commenting upon this scene, tell us that

"when Esau entered, the *Gehenna*, the jaws of hell, opened before him." What mean these strange words? Simply this, that Isaac, even though he was blind, suddenly saw clearly what would happen to him if Esau was to be his spiritual successor. "I see the *Gehenna* before me!" He saw that death would mean for him not the *Beth ha-Hayim*, not an opportunity to live on through the life of his child, but a *Beth Hak'voroth*, burying every vestige of his life and his work.

And so too does the message come to us. Many of us, too, can see the *Gehenna* open before us as we contemplate the lives of our offspring. Let us then take to heart the inspiring lesson that the Memorial Service brings to us. We want to honor our dear ones. We want to show them how great is the love we bear for them. Who of us would not give our all to bring them back to life? Do you want them to live? Then live their lives! Practice their goodness, their virtue, their piety; emulate their Jewishness, their love and their sacrifices for their God and their people, and they will live—their death will be but the entrance to a *Beth ha-Hayim*, to a real, vital, throbbing life. Your words uttered in prayer will be realized. God will in truth "bind their souls in the bond of life."

Thus, then, does this service speak to us. Do not be the *Beth Hak'voroth* Jew—the Jew who has turned his heart into a grave for all that is good and beautiful and holy in life—but rather the *Beth Olom* Jew, the Jew who lives with a sense of eternity, as the child of an immortal God, for the end that the eternal truths and blessings of life shall prevail.

Let us pray for life, but a life that shall not end with the grave, a life that shall continue to eternity, through its nobility of character, through the service it renders its fellow men. But, above all, let us strive to turn death into a *Beth ha-Hayim*, by living nobly ourselves and by teaching our children the kind of life they ought to live. So that, when we shall have gone the way of all flesh, we too may find our reward in the faith that "God will redeem my soul from the grasp of the grave, for He will receive me!" Amen.

# ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW YEAR

*by Rabbi Abraham P. Bloch*

American Jewry enters the New Year saddled with serious problems which cannot be ignored. It would be folly to rely on the folk adage - "Time solves most problems." The solution of time may spell either resolution or dissolution. Thus we are never sure whether time is our ally or our enemy.

The viability and security of Israel is still the primary concern of Jews in the Diaspora. It is true that the unprecedented elation and pride which greeted the birth of the Jewish state has gradually given way to a debilitating state of anxiety. The burdens of the average Israeli, the price of maintaining national independence, are constantly on the increase. In terms of loss of life, a deteriorating economy and the drain of emigration, the outgoing year has brought no relief.

Yet the outlook is by far not as bleak as is perceived by Israel's enemies. Israel is coping, though painfully, with its many problems. The peace treaty with Egypt has survived despite the strains of the Lebanese war. The swollen power of oil-rich Arabs has declined. American support of Israel, economic and political, is on the rise. The financial assistance of world Jewry, awash with its own concerns, has not slackened, nor is it likely to diminish in the future.

The visit of President Reagan to the German military cemetery at Bitburg, regrettable as it was, has had the beneficial effect of reminding the world and the German people that the vile deeds of Hitler, with the acquiescence of the majority of the nation, will not be forgotten. Mankind does not have the moral right to forgive the guilty, nor must it permit the innocent to forget. The emotions aroused by the President's visit are a reminder to present and future German generations that even though they are not guilty by association they must forever recoil with horror from the memory of the Holocaust.

The attention of world Jewry has in the

past year increasingly focused on what has become its uppermost concern, the survival of Judaism. The disease is assimilation; the symptom, intermarriage. The percentage rate of intermarried first generation Jews (foreign born) has doubled in the second generation and quadrupled in the third. This points to a geometric progression that is alarming, to say the least.

The problem of our religious survival has for too long a time been the exclusive concern of religious organizations. Our national lay bodies were mainly preoccupied with social and welfare problems, and, above all, with defense against anti-Semitism. The mounting inner crisis has finally affected communal assessments of priorities. Larger proportions of community funds are diverted to Jewish educational and religious institutions. The problems of Jewish singles is receiving greater attention.

To make a dent in the ravages of assimilation, the Jewish community must pool its financial and leadership resources. Only a joint effort of all our diverse religious groupings can hope to slow the rate of attrition. Unfortunately, recent developments have widened the gap between the different religious elements of Jewry. This bodes ill for any potential of friendly cooperation. Right wing Orthodox elements, currently in the ascendancy, are opposed to joining efforts with non-Orthodox for fear of lending validity to those groups. The recent approval by the Conservative of women rabbis has further widened the gap to a point where even the centrist in the Orthodox camp no longer wish to cooperate with the Conservatives in matters of religion. The fact that the names of Reform women rabbis who officiate at mixed marriages appear with greater frequency in the press is a further handicap to cooperation.

The Orthodox claim, with considerable justification, that the only solution to assimilation is Orthodoxy. They point out

that Orthodox families have fewer intermarriages than Conservative and Reform. They also point to the net of Day Schools which have strengthened the religious consciousness of a growing number of Jewish youth. What about the non-Orthodox Jews who constitute a majority of American Jewry? Many serious Orthodox leaders are concerned with this problem. Others, however, claim that they must concentrate their attention on strengthening Orthodoxy. All effort invested in the other segments of Jewry is merely a palliative and a waste. This division within Orthodoxy weakens the effectiveness of its contribution to a solution of the problem of assimilation.

The Conservative and Reform movements suffer from an inner structural weakness. Whereas the Orthodox leadership presides over a following committed to Orthodoxy, the majority of Conservative and Reform Jews are not committed to the principles to which their movements subscribe. For example, Kashruth and Sabbath observance, proclaimed tenets of the Conservative movement are ignored by much of the membership. Attendance at worship services, stressed by the Conservative and Reform, are mainly observed in the breach. Under such circumstances, the leadership can exert little influence over its following. The force of tradition became circumscribed by limitations imposed by the discretion and choice of individual congregants.

It is easy and tempting to say that the solution lies in the adoption of Orthodoxy by the entire Jewish community. That, however, is merely wishful thinking. We have yet to prove that in a cultural democratic society, with a rigid separation of church and state, Orthodoxy can remain the dominant religious force of the Jewish community.

The combined membership of the principal three religious groups falls short of the total of American Jews. There is a large mass of unaffiliated Jews with



various degrees of adherence to Jewish traditions. Some maintain an informal affiliation with the synagogue; others have become completely estranged. The organized religious community has lost all contact with them and remains impotent in the face of unbridled assimilation.

The danger of assimilation is so great that we cannot afford the luxury of watchful waiting. Certain prerequisite conditions must prevail before we can hope to make a contribution, however modest, to the survival of the Jewish community at its present level.

The most pressing need for consensus is in the definition of who is a Jew. Orthodoxy by its very nature is unable to deviate from traditional guidelines which determine the question of Jewish identity. A Jew is one born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism in accordance with halachah. The price of unity in this sensitive area is an acceptance by all groups of the maximal demands of Orthodoxy.

Another sensitive area is the definition of what constitutes a religious marriage and divorce. Here again the Orthodox have very little leeway for compromise. For the sake of unity, the maximal demands of this group will have to be met. A failure to attain unanimity will

further fragmentize the community into separatist sects.

Agreement on the previous points will pave the way for the establishment of a centralized conversion bureau to oversee all conversions. The bureau will be under the auspices of all religious groups.

Rabbinic bodies must exercise greater discipline over their memberships to prevent flagrant abuses by individuals who disregard policies adopted by the national body. This is particularly true of rabbinic participation in religious ceremonies of intermarriages.

Will the elimination of rabbinic participation reduce the number of intermarriages? Hardly so. It will, however, strengthen the moral force of rabbinic bodies in combatting assimilation.

The achievement of a united religious voice is a precondition to the next step, the establishment of a national body composed of religious and lay representatives, to deal exclusively with the problem of assimilation. There is much that can be done on a national level through educational campaigns and the employment of disciplinary measures.

The time to act is now!

# MAIMONIDES BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE

by Rabbi Mordecai H. Lewittes

The world is now celebrating the 850th anniversary of the birth of Maimonides or Rambam (*Rabbi Moses ben Maimon*). Moses' father, Maimon (Benedict) ben Joseph, was a distinguished Dayyan or judge in Cordova. From him the son acquired a profound love of learning; Moses mastered both Talmud and the philosophy and medical science of his day.

For the layman much of Rambam's work is inaccessible or too abstract. His Code (*Mishneh Torah*), however, is available in various translations and not too difficult to follow. The "Book of Knowledge," for example, first of the 14

books that constitute the Code, has recently been published in paperback with a new translation by Dr. Helen Russell and Rabbi Jacob Weinberg (N.Y.: Ktav Publishing, 1983).

The first treatise of "The Book of Knowledge" deals with the foundations of the Torah. The basis for the Torah is to know "that there is a primary reality," one and incorporeal, who is the cause of all existence. Those who question Biblical expressions such as "under His feet," "the finger of God," "the hand of the Lord," should realize that these expressions are metaphorical. The Torah speaks the language of men (*Dibberah Torah Ki-leshon Be-ney Adam*).

It is a positive commandment to love this great and awe-inspiring God. When man contemplates God's works he realizes that he is only a minute creature capable of but a little knowledge in the presence of perfect knowledge. In obeying God's commandments one is guided by the teaching "Live by them." One should violate even the Sabbath and Yom Kippur if there is a threat to life. The only exceptions would be a decree to violate the prohibitions against idolatry, immorality and bloodshed where death is preferable to transgression.

Moses received the Torah at Mt. Sinai. We accept his prophecies not because of any miracles he performed but because our ancestors were witnesses to the revelation. So, too, if a prophet arises among us it is not necessary for him to deliver a sign. He must advocate the Lord's service in obeying the commands of the Torah and his predictions must meet the test of truth.

The second treatise is called "Discernment." Here the Rambam advocates the golden mean. "The right path is the middle path." One should not be a miser or a spendthrift. One should avoid gluttony and drunkenness but not go to the other extreme of asceticism. One should not say, "I shall remove myself to the other extreme and not eat meat, not drink wine, not marry, not live in a pleasant place, and not dress nicely, but in a sack of worse wool." Maimonides quotes with approval the Talmudic saying that one should spend less on food than he can afford, dress in keeping with his means, but be especially generous in providing for his wife and children.

One may not take revenge. Let us suppose one says to his friend, "Lend me your axe" and he refuses. The next day the friend has need of an axe. One may not say, "Just as you refused me so I refuse to lend to you." That would be taking revenge.

So, too, one may not bear a grudge in his heart but must gently rebuke his neighbor, where necessary, with words of love.

Most famous section of "The Book of Knowledge" is treatise three called "The

Study of the Torah" One is obligated to teach his children and grandchildren and to study throughout one's life. A lover of Torah must work and not depend on charity.

Every Israelite has a duty to study whether he is poor or rich, whether healthy or suffering, whether young or very old and in failing strength, even if he is poor and supported by charity or begs from door to door. Even if he is a married man with a wife and children, it is a duty to set aside time to study day and night, as the verse says: "Thou shalt meditate therein day and night." (Joshua 1, 8)

Women may study but are not required to do so. (Unfortunately, Maimonides shared the almost universal prejudice against women that prevailed until modern times.) He himself frequently stated that he does not claim to be always right and therefore welcomed criticism — this is one area where he is vulnerable.

A city in which there is no school should be ostracized. Children should be enrolled at the age of six years. 25 children may be assigned to one teacher. A teacher may not punish in anger but he may use a little strap. The teacher sits at the head of his students who surround him in a circle. The teacher may not sit on a seat and the pupils on the ground; either all sit on seats or on the ground. One need not be ashamed if his classmates learned the first or second time and he had to repeat many times. "One who is easily ashamed cannot really learn." One rises in the presence of his teacher and mourns for him at his death by rending his garment.

The fourth treatise is called "Idolatry." 51 prohibitions in the Torah against idolatry include necromancy, spiritualism, consulting omens, astrology, tattooing, or cutting the flesh in mourning. Maimonides would have severely rebuked the believers in horoscopes in our own day and those rulers — all too frequent both in the Orient and the West — who consult astrologers before making political decisions. The emphasis, as in his other writings, is on reason rather than superstition.

Maimonides did not regard Christians or Moslems as idolaters. Furthermore, throughout his works, he cites with approval the statement in the Tosefta, "The righteous among the nations of the world have a share in the world to come."

The final treatise in "The Book of Knowledge" is called "Repentance." Since the Temple is no longer standing "there is nothing left but repentance." The Day of Atonement atones only for those sins that are between man and God, but sins between man and his fellow men are never pardoned unless there is full restitution and pacification. "Even if he has only provoked his neighbor in words, he must make peace and entreat him until he forgives." The one who had been wronged ought to forgive with a whole heart and a willing spirit.

The shofar blown on Rosh Hashanah is a call to repentance. It is symbolic, as if saying:

*"Awake ye sleepers from your sleep... Examine your needs and turn in repentance and remember your Creator... Look to your lives, improve your ways and deeds and let each one abandon his evil ways and bad thoughts. Therefore it is necessary for each man to regard himself all the year round as balanced between innocence and guilt. Similarly the whole world is balanced between innocence and guilt. If a sinner sins, he may bring down himself and all the world on the side of guilt and so cause destruction. He who observes a precept may bring himself and the whole world onto the side of virtue, and so gain salvation and deliverance for himself and them."*

The lay readers might do well to begin his study of Maimonides with the Russell and Weinberg translation. Here one finds the basic themes of love of God, the need to preserve life, the pursuit of the "middle path," the priority of Torah, the importance of reason and avoidance of idolatry and superstition, and the importance of repentance and forgiveness.

Maimonides refused to interpret the Bible literally. "The Bible speaks the language of man." One might add that the Bible appeals to the heart and mind of man.

## THE MITZVOT

by Nathan Krinsky, M.D.

It has been said that the uniqueness of Judaism can be found in the commandments, for the basic elements of Jewish law, which cover the full range of human experience, are found in the Mitzvot, the commandments of God. In the Mitzvot of the Torah are found the guidelines to the full expression for the ethical requirements and religious concepts. It is through them that the Jewish ideal of morality and its commitment of faith are made part of the reality of life.

The commandments are the "divine blueprint" for the ideal life. They provide a divinely-ordered way-of-life for man's existence, developing through them ethical concerns for his fellowman and pointing his spiritual life towards the service of God.

Judaism has always stressed the observance of the divine commandments as a prime obligation incumbent upon every Jew. It has been taught that "The Almighty sought to give merit to (or refine) Israel, hence he multiplied for them the Torah commandments." In our studies in our Mishna class we have tried to achieve a clear understanding of this multiplicity, and the manner in which the Sages gave meaning and value to the Mitzvot.

Questions have been raised, asking, "What is a Mitzvah," and, "What is its fundamental intent?" To define it merely as a "command," or even to state that it is "God's command," seems to be too simplistic and unsatisfactory; for as one author brought out by quoting various learned authorities, there goes with the obedience a spirit of "communion with God"; a feeling of great joy, and as Nachmanides saw in the Mitzvah performance, "a state of ecstasy." Maimonides believed that the Mitzvah acts as prophylactic against the Yetzer-ha-rah (man's evil intuition. In our own time, the late Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel, Abraham Isaac Kook, also believed that, by obeying the moral laws, men were actually doing the will of God.



Involved in the study of the Mitzvot is the question: What value or purpose is there in the practical observance or intellectual analysis of those Mitzvot that seem to be outdated and no longer applicable? These questions have been asked of me in our Mishna class many times. The answers require careful and deep thought; we have touched upon them in our previous discussions, and we shall touch upon them again as we continue our class study. It will take us too far afield, in space limits, to treat this subject at this time.

However, in brief it may be said that these laws were promulgated primarily to establish a society based upon justice and righteousness, and to lead to a perfection of man's soul, which is attained, as Maimonides stated, "by training in faith and by imparting true opinions."

A study of the Mitzvot, particularly those which may appear not to be applicable in our time, does inform us of the nature of the society of our biblical ancestors, of what they thought and believed, and of how they attempted to cope with their problems — always with their sight on the will of God.

And even today there are those who agree with Maimonides that when the rationale of a particular Mitzvot is not readily apparent, or the Mitzvot may appear useless, the error lies not with the Divine law, but with the individual who is not yet intelligent enough to understand the ways and works of God.

In ancient times there arose the question, "How many Mitzvot in fact are there?" A cursory study of the Torah would lead one to believe that there are several thousand. However, a casual remark made by one of the Sages in the Talmud caused quite a lot of discussion and perhaps confusion. Rabbi Simlai (B. Makkot 23b) stated that 613 Mitzvot were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. These consist of 248 positive commandments, corresponding to the number of components of the body, and 365 negative commandments, which correspond to the number of days in the year. Each part of his body urges man to do good; every day of the year he is warned against committing sin.

If, as was said above, there are more than 613 commandments, which 613 did Rabbi Simlai have in mind? Certainly, he was not specific; and this caused great differences of opinion. However, it seems that most enumerations are in agreement with the calculation of those of Maimonides.

One soon learns that if in the area of enumerating the acceptable Mitzvot there is great discussion, this is even more so when one reads about the differences of opinion regarding whether it is necessary or even permitted to find reasons for the Mitzvot — the ta'amei ha-mitzvah (the reason or rationale for the Mitzvah). These range from the need to understand, and the need to keep involved the more knowledgeable and inquisitive who want to delve deeper and to know more — to those who believed that it was not necessary to know, and that it should suffice that the commandments were given by God. ("Va-Yomer Ha-Shem").

One current author, Rabbi Abraham Chill, makes the plea that if in our studies, in our Ta'amei ha-mitzvot — there may be a rationale that is unappealing, then the student should not quickly assume to himself the monopoly of wisdom and reject that rationale. Humility, he writes, is an indispensable characteristic of the true student and scholar. What may appear irrational today, may become clear, lucid and thoroughly acceptable tomorrow.

He believes that beneath the surface of the Mitzvot lie depths of meaning to exercise the mind of the *thinking Jew*.

I believe that we have found this to be so, and that we shall continue to find it to be so.

(Adapted from a talk given by Dr. Nathan Krinsky to the class of the Mishnah Fellowship of The Brooklyn Jewish Center.)

# Sabbath and Holy Day Services

## Sunday, September 8

Selihot Services ..... 7:30 am  
(followed by Schachrit Services)

Selihot (Penitential Prayers) signal us to prepare ourselves for the approaching High Holy Days Season. Upon the completion of the services, all in attendance are invited to partake of breakfast which is sponsored by our Men's Club.

## Friday, September 13

Candle Lighting ..... 6:49 pm

## Saturday, September 14

Services ..... 8:30 am  
Sidra: NITZAVIM  
Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20  
Prophets: Isaiah 61:10-63:9

## Sunday, September 15

*Eve of Rosh Hashanah 5746*  
Candle Lighting ..... 6:46 pm  
Services ..... 6:30 pm

## Monday, September 16

*Rosh Hashanah*  
Services ..... 7:30 am

## Monday evening, September 16

Candle Lighting ..... 7:48 pm  
Services ..... 7:30 pm

## Tuesday, September 17

*Rosh Hashanah*  
Services ..... 7:30 am  
Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the Jewish New Year, is also the beginning of the Ten Days of Penitence, which end with Yom Kippur. Sincere prayers and meditation help us to experience the reality of the Almighty and to dedicate ourselves anew to the establishment of His kingdom on earth — the reign of freedom, justice and peace.

## Wednesday, September 18

*Fast of Gedaliah*  
The Fast of Gedaliah commemorates the climax of the disasters that befell the First Jewish Commonwealth in 586 B.C.E.

## Friday, September 20

Candle Lighting ..... 6:37 am

**Saturday, September 21***Shabbat Shuvah*

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sidra: VAYELEKH  
 Deuteronomy 31:1-30  
 Prophets: Hosea 14:2-10;  
 Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-17

Shabbat Shuvah derives its name from the Haftorah of that day which begins with the word Shuvah - "Return" that is, repent.

**Tuesday, September 24***Kol Nidre*

Candle Lighting .....prior to services  
 Services .....6:30 pm

**Wednesday, September 25***Yom Kippur*

Services .....8:30 am  
 Yizkor (Memorial Services) . 11:15 am  
 Neilah .....5:30 pm  
 Shofar .....7:30 pm  
 Yom Kippur sermons: On Yom Kippur Eve, the sermon by Rabbi Bloch will be preached immediately after the chanting of Kol Nidre.

On Yom Kippur morning, the sermon by Rabbi Bloch and the President's annual message, by Mr. Benjamin Moskowitz, will follow the Memorial Services.

The Day of Atonement is a day of fasting and prayer when we strive to awaken the latent spiritual power in our souls so that it may become an effective and directing force in our daily conduct.

**Friday, September 27**

Candle Lighting .....6:25 pm

**Saturday, September 28**

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sidra: Deuteronomy 32:1-52  
 Prophets: II Samuel 22:1-51

**Sunday, September 29***Eve of Sukkot*

Candle Lighting .....6:22 pm  
 Services .....6:30 pm

**Monday, September 30***Sukkot - First Day*

Services .....8:30 am

**Monday evening, September 30**

Candle Lighting .....7:24 pm  
 Services .....7:15 pm

**Tuesday, October 1***Sukkot - Second Day*

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sukkot (Feast of Thanksgiving) is the Jewish festival of thanksgiving on the occasion of the final ingathering of the harvest. The Sukkah symbolizes the wanderings of our ancestors in the wilderness of Sinai.

**Friday, October 4**

Candle Lighting .....6:14 pm

**Saturday, October 5***Shabbat Hol Hamoed Sukkot*

Services .....8:30 am

**Sunday, October 6***Hosha'na Rabbah*

Services .....8:00 am

**Sunday evening, October 6***Eve of Shemini Atzeret*

Candle Lighting .....6:10 pm  
 Services .....6:00 pm

**Monday, October 7***Shemini Atzeret*

Services .....8:30 am  
 Yizkor (Memorial Services) . 10:15 am

**Monday evening, October 7***Eve of Simchat Torah*

Candle Lighting .....7:12 pm  
 Services .....7:00 pm

**Tuesday, October 8***Simchat Torah*

Services .....8:30 am

**Friday, October 11**

Candle Lighting .....6:04 pm

**Saturday, October 12***Blessing of new month of Heshvan\**

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sidra: BERESBIT  
 Genesis 1:1.6:8  
 Prophets: Isaiah 42:5-43:10

\*Rosh Hodesh Heshvan is observed on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 15 and 16.

**Friday, October 18**

Candle Lighting .....5:50 pm

**Saturday, October 19**

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sidra: NOAH  
 Genesis 6:9-11:32  
 Prophets: Isaiah 54:1-55:5

**Thursday, October 24***United Nations Day***Friday, October 25**

Candle Lighting .....5:42 pm

**Saturday, October 26**

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sidra: LEKH-LEKHA  
 Genesis 12:1-17:27  
 Prophets: Isaiah 40:27-41:16

**Sunday, October 27**

Daylight Savings Time ends today. Remember to turn your timepiece back one hour.

Services .....8:30 am EST

**Friday, November 1**

Candle Lighting .....4:33 pm

**Saturday, November 2***Balfour Day*

Services .....8:30 am  
 Sidra: VAYERA  
 Genesis 18:1-22:24  
 Prophets: II Kings 4:1-37

The Balfour Declaration, issued on November 2, 1917, was the first recognition by a modern nation of the Jewish claim to Palestine as a national homeland.

Following Sabbath Services, the entire congregation is invited to partake of Kiddush. A special invitation is extended to the Congregation by our Men's Club which will sponsor a Kiddush on October 26 in memory of our late Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal on the occasion of his third yearzeit.

Rev. Stein will officiate at all Sabbath, Selihot and Festival Services.

**NOTEWORTHY DAYS DURING OCTOBER**

Needless to say, as is apparent in the schedule of our religious services, the early part of October is a joyous period as we celebrate the Festival of Sukkot.

But we must take note of two events of world-wide importance. Here in the United States we will observe Columbus Day on Monday, October 14 instead of October 12. By the juxtaposition of this day to honor the man who dared to cross the Atlantic seeking a route to another part of the world, we have converted a day of great importance to a mere part of a long weekend, to accommodate people seeking more and more time to take off.

Not subject to tampering, the world will observe Thursday, October 24 as United Nations Day. How well do we recall those early days when this successor to the League of Nations was organized in San Francisco forty years ago. When Israel was admitted to its membership, we had great cause to celebrate. Unfortunately, the League founded on Ethiopian rocks and now the U.N. is all tied up in knots as enemies of Israel have converted the organization into something unhealthy for the world. We hope on this 40th anniversary, it will be restored to health and an instrument that will render justice to all.







## *New Year Greetings from Officers and Staff*

On the eve of the Jewish New Year 5746, the officers of the Brooklyn Jewish Center extend to all the members and friends of our institution their best wishes for a year of health, happiness and joy. May we, together with all mankind, be blessed with peace and prosperity.

In this hour, as the New Year is ushered in, we, the officers of this institution, take this opportunity of thanking all our members for their devotion and loyalty to our Center. We are confident that with the cooperation of our membership the year 5746 will be crowned with new achievements and success in our work.

On behalf of our community and our people,

**L'SHONAH TOVO TIKOSEVU!**

Benjamin Moskowitz . . . . . President  
Emanuel Cohen . . . . . Hon. President  
Benjamin Markowe . . . . . Past President  
Louis Kramer . . . . . Vice President & Secretary  
Isaac Franco . . . . . Vice President & Treasurer  
Harry Leventhal . . . . . Hon. Vice President

### **FROM THE CENTER STAFF**

The Center Staff extends to the Rabbis, Officers, Trustees, Governors and members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and their families, cordial greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

### **FROM THE SISTERHOOD**

The Officers of the Sisterhood extend heartiest New Year Greetings to all of our members and their families. Sisterhood looks back with pride and satisfaction on its activities during the year

5745 and hopes for an even more successful season in 5746.

### **WITH BEST WISHES FOR A SHONO TOVA UMESUKA**

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Molly Markowe . . . . . Corresponding Secretary  
Sylvia Moskowitz . . . . . Treasurer

### **FROM THE MEN'S CLUB**

The Officers of the Men's Club wish all its members, families and friends a year of health and good tidings and a year that will bring true peace to our beloved land, to the State of Israel and to all mankind.

We invite each and every one of you to participate in this coming year's events.

May the Lord bless the entire Center, and may we and our families all be inscribed in the Book of Life and Happiness.

**L'SHONAH TOVO TIKOSEVU!**

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*"It hath been told thee, oh Man  
What is good and what the Lord doth require of thee  
Only to do justly  
And to love mercy  
And to walk humbly with Thy God."*

*-Micah*

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From Her Family

*To The Members of The Brooklyn Jewish Center*

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***Men's Club  
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for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year  
to all its members and friends*

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*Mother and Father*

Ruth M. Greenberg

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A Happy and Healthy New Year  
To  
All My Brooklyn Jewish Center Friends*

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*Leon Wasserman, Esq.*

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